Place Services
Essex County Council
County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH
www.placeservices.co.uk

Nicola Pettifer
Horsham District Council
Parkside
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: 15878
Date: 14 April 2026

By email only: Planning Department, planning@horsham.gov.uk

Thank you for requesting advice on this Choose an Application from Place Services' ecological advice service. This service provides advice to planning officers to inform Horsham District Council planning decisions with regard to potential ecological impacts from development.

Application: DC/25/1910
Location: Land East of Billinghurst Business Park (Phase 2) Stane Street Billingshurst West Sussex
Proposal: "Outline planning permission for up to 125no. homes and associated infrastructure/green space with all matters reserved apart from access."

Thank you for re-consulting Place Services on the application.

No ecological objection	☐
No ecological objection subject to attached conditions	☒
Further information required/Temporary holding objection	☐
Recommend Refusal	☐
Subject to Natural England's formal comments on the conclusion of the LPA's Appropriate Assessment	☒

Please refer to Horsham District Councils advice regarding Water Neutrality requirements following Natural England's Withdrawal Statement (31st October 2025).

Summary

We have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and identification of appropriate mitigation measures. Please note that comments on mandatory biodiversity net gain are provided by Horsham District Council in-house.

We are now satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination of this application

The site lies approximately 4.9km east of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is therefore within the 6.5 km Key Conservation Area for the SAC (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol), within which all impacts must be assessed. The site lies approximately 10.6km east of Ebernoe Common SAC and therefore lies within the 12km Wider Conservation Area for this SAC. The qualifying feature of the SAC is Barbastelle bat, but this species has not been recorded within 2km of the site. No European Protected Species Mitigation Licences have been granted within 2km of the site (MAGIC maps). There are approximately 44 records of bats within 2km of the site, including Brandt's Bat, Common Pipistrelle, Serotine, Bechstein and Brown Long-eared (SBISx – accessed under licence). The site lies approximately 9.3km north of Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar site.

We note from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) that there are no buildings on site and that no trees contain Potential Roost Features for bats. We therefore agree that no further surveys for bats are required. We did previously raise a query regarding the potential severance of flight lines, stating "*We note from the Biodiversity Net Gain Design Stage Report (All Ecology, December 2025) that the only habitats to be retained are the Penduculate Oak tree, 0.1964ha of scrub and the species-rich native hedgerow on the northern boundary. However, Section 4.12 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) states that the proposals will retain boundary habitats to the north and to the east. We understand from the Biodiversity Net Gain Design Stage Report (All Ecology, December 2025) that the applicant intends to use biodiversity offsetting as there will be a -79.50% loss of hedgerow and -14.63% of habitats.*"

The above lack of correlation has now been discussed, and the boundary hedgerow retention and compensatory planting is now being secured as part of the proposals. This addresses our previous concerns. These measures should be secured with a Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan.

We understand from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) that the site comprises two fields of grassland, scrub, ruderal, species rich native hedgerow on the north boundary, native hedgerow on the eastern boundary of the north field,

scattered trees and a boundary fence. We also understand from the Arboricultural Assessment (Tim Pursey, July 2025) that no trees will be removed to facilitate the development.

Therefore, as indicated above, there will be no severance to the flight lines of foraging or commuting bats from the SAC and habitat connectivity within the site will be maintained.

It is recommended in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) that a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented for this application to mitigate against the increase in light measures following Bat Conservation Trust advice and The Institution of Lighting Professionals.

As there is a potential for habitat fragmentation from light spill of potentially functionally linked land for Barbastelle bats, this has been screened in and will need to be considered at Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the LPA's project level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

As Barbastelle bat may use the onsite habitat, we support the recommendation that a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy is implemented for this application (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025)), to avoid impacts from light disturbance. This should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. Therefore, technical specification should be submitted prior to occupation, which demonstrates measures to avoid lighting impacts to foraging / commuting bats, which are likely to be present within the local area. This should summarise the following measures recommended by Guidance Note:08/23 (Institute of Lighting Professionals) will be implemented:

- Do not provide excessive lighting. Light levels should be as low as possible as required to fulfil the lighting need.
- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, compact fluorescent sources should not be used.
- Warm White lights should be used at <2700k. This is necessary as lighting which emits an ultraviolet component or that has a blue spectral content has a high attraction effect on insects. This may lead in a reduction in prey availability for some light sensitive bat species.
- Where appropriate, external security lighting should be set on motion-sensors and set to as short a possible a timer as the risk assessment will allow.
- Luminaires should always be mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt.
- Only if all other options have been explored, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed. However, due to the lensing and fine cut-off control of the beam inherent in modern LED luminaires, the effect of cowls and baffles is often far less than anticipated and so should not be relied upon solely.

We therefore believe that, with mitigation, there will be no Adverse Effect on Integrity of the SAC. We advise the LPA to prepare a project level HRA Appropriate Assessment to record its decision and consult Natural England on the conclusion.

We note from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) that there is one record of Hazel Dormouse 850m to the south of the site in 2004 and there is suitable habitat for this species in the boundary hedgerow. However, as the boundary hedgerows to the north and east will be retained with buffers, we agree that no further surveys for Hazel Dormouse are required.

We support the Precautionary Method Statement for mobile protected species (including Hedgehog, which is a Priority and threatened species) in Section 4.13 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025). This should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full.

We are satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available to support determination of this application. However, please note we have no comments on Great Crested Newt as we have been instructed to leave comments on this European Protected Species to the NatureSpace Partnership.

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable.

The mitigation measures identified in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. This is necessary to conserve and enhance protected and Priority species particularly those recorded in the locality, including Hazel Dormouse and mobile protected species. The finalised measures should be provided in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan - Biodiversity to be secured as a pre-commencement condition of any consent.

We also support the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements for protected, Priority and threatened species, which have been recommended in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) to secure net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 187d and 193d of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a separate Biodiversity Enhancement Layout and should be secured by a condition of any consent.

This will enable LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006 (as amended) and delivery of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain.

Impacts will be minimised such that the proposal is acceptable, subject to the conditions below based on BS42020:2013. We recommend that submission for approval and implementation of the details below should be a condition of any planning consent.

Recommended conditions

1. **ACTION REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

"All mitigation measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025 *as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.*

This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details."

Reason*:* To conserve protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

2. **CONCURRENT WITH RESERVED MATTERS: PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT: CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BIODIVERSITY**

"A construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following.

- *a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.*
- *b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".*
- *c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).*
- *d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.*
- *e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.*
- *f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.*
- *g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.*
- *h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.*

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority"

Reason*:* To conserve protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

3. **CONCURRENT WITH RESERVED MATTERS: PRIOR TO ANY WORKS ABOVE SLAB LEVEL: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT LAYOUT**

"A Biodiversity Enhancement Layout for the biodiversity enhancements listed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (All Ecology, September 2025) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Layout shall include the following:

a) *detailed designs or product descriptions for biodiversity enhancements; including the retention of the northern hedgerow boundary and a compensatory planting along the eastern boundary; and*
b) *locations, orientations and heights for biodiversity enhancements on appropriate drawings.*

The enhancement measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter."

Reason: To enhance protected and Priority species & habitats and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under paragraph 187d of the NPPF 2024 and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended) and Policy 31 of the Horsham Development Framework.

4. **CONCURRENT WITH RESERVED MATTERS: PRIOR TO OCCUPATION: WILDLIFE SENSITIVE LIGHTING DESIGN SCHEME**

"*Prior to occupation, a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" in accordance with Guidance Note 08/23 (Institute of Lighting Professionals) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:*

a) *identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and*
b) *show how and where external lighting will be installed (through provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.*

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the scheme and maintained thereafter in accordance with the

scheme. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority."

Reason: To allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

5. ACTION REQUIRED CONCURRENT WITH RESERVED MATTERS: TIME LIMIT ON DEVELOPMENT BEFORE FURTHER SURVEYS ARE REQUIRED

If the outline application hereby approved does not commence within one year from the date of the planning consent, the approved ecological mitigation measures secured through condition shall be reviewed and, where necessary, amended and updated.

The review shall be informed by further ecological surveys commissioned to:

i. establish if there have been any changes in the presence and/or abundance of protected species and

ii. identify any likely new ecological impacts that might arise from any changes.

Where the survey results indicate that changes have occurred that will result in ecological impacts not previously addressed in the approved scheme, the original approved ecological measures will be revised and new or amended measures, and a timetable for their implementation, will be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the mixed use development, including detailed permission for means of access and 1,338 sqm business floorspace with the remainder of the development in outline, comprising up to 102no. homes and up to 5,605 sqm of business floorspace (Classes E g (iii)/B2/B8). Works will then be carried out in accordance with the proposed new approved ecological measures and timetable."

Works will then be carried out in accordance with the proposed new approved ecological measures and timetable."

Reason: To allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

Please contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Hayley Dean MCIEEM MSc BSc (Hons)
Senior Ecological Consultant

Place Services at Essex County Council

Place Services provide ecological advice on behalf of Horsham District Council.

Please note:
This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.
We are unable to respond directly to applicants/agents or other interested parties. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant/agent or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer at the relevant LPA, who will seek further advice from us where appropriate.